

REMARKS

The Applicants have carefully studied the outstanding Office Action. The present submission is intended to be fully responsive to the rejection raised by the Office Action and is believed to place the application in condition for allowance. Further, the Applicants do not acquiesce to any of the Office Action rejections not particularly addressed. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the application is respectfully requested.

Allowable Claims and Applicant Initiated Interview

At the outset, the Applicants thank the Examiner for stating that claims 32-33, 35-36, 44-46 and 48 would be allowable if rewritten to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The Applicants also thank the Examiner for his time on February 15, 2005 to discuss a proposed claim amendment, which is included above in its entirety.

Claim Status and Response to Claim Objections

The application presently includes 36 claims, namely claims 31-66. After entry of the above-listed amendment, the application will include only 30 claims. Prior to the amendment:

- (i) claims 31, 34, 37, 38, 49, 50, 56, 58, 60, 61, 62, 64 and 65 were in independent format;
- (ii) claim 32 directly depended from claim 31;
- (iii) claim 33 depended from claim 31 via claim 32;
- (iv) claims 35 directly depended from claim 34;
- (v) claims 36 depended from claim 34 via claim 35;
- (vi) claims 39-48 ultimately depended from claim 37;
- (vii) claims 51-59 ultimately depended from claim 49; and
- (viii) claims 66 ultimately depended from claim 65.

After entry of the above-listed amendment:

- (i) only claims 31, 34, 37, 38, 48, 49, 50, 58, 61, and 64 are in independent format;
- (ii) claim 32, which was noted as being allowable, has been cancelled and the elements thereof have been amended into independent claim 31;
- (iii) claim 33 now directly depends from claim 31;
- (iv) claim 35, which was noted as being allowable, has been cancelled and the elements thereof have been amended into independent claim 34;
- (v) claim 36 now directly depends from claim 34;
- (vi) claim 44, which was noted as being allowable, has been cancelled and the elements thereof have been amended into independent claim 37;
- (vii) claims 39-43 and 45-47 now ultimately depend from claim 37;
- (viii) claim 60, which was formerly in independent form, has been amended into dependent form and now depends from claim 37;
- (ix) claim 48, which was noted as being allowable and which formerly depended directly from claim 37, has been re-written into independent form incorporating all of the elements of claim 37;
- (x) claims 57-59 now ultimately depend from claim 48;
- (xi) claim 62, which was formerly in independent form, has been amended into dependent form and now depends from claim 48;
- (xii) claim 49 maintains its independent form but has been amended to include the elements of claim 37;
- (xiii) claims 51-55 now ultimately depend from claim 49;

- (xiv) system claim 64 maintains its independent form but has been amended and now includes the elements similar to the elements of method claims 31 and 32; and
- (xv) independent claims 56 and 65-66 have been cancelled.

As noted above, the Applicants have, in accord with the Examiner's statement that claims 32-33, 35-36, 44-46 and 48 would be allowable, (i) amended the claims 31, 33, 34, 36, 37 and 48; and (ii) cancelled claims 32, 35 and 44. Please note, however, that upon favorable consideration of these claims, the Applicants request a renumbering of the claims to accommodate the amendments. No new matter has been added. Further, the Applicants submit that no additional fee is due as a result of the present amendment because the total amount of claims and the total amount independent claims in the present amendment are less than the total amount of claims and total amount of independent claims previously presented.

Claim Rejections and Response thereto

The Examiner rejected claims 31, 34, 37-43, 46-47, 49-54, 56-59 and 60-66 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,223,222 granted to Fijolek et al. ("Fijolek") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,438,110 granted to Rai et al. ("Rai"). The Applicants submit that the rejection of these claims is no longer warranted in light of the amendment to the claims.

To this end, the Applicants have amended claims 31, 34, and 37 to include the elements of claims 32, 35 and 44, respectively, thereby placing the claims in condition for allowance and making the rejection moot. Claims 39-43, 45-47 and 60 now ultimately depend from claim 37, and are therefore placed in condition for allowance.

Further, the Applicants have amended claim 48 to include the elements of claim 37, thereby placing this claim in condition for allowance and making the rejection moot. Claims 57-59 and 62 now ultimately depend from claim 48, and are therefore placed in condition for allowance. The Applicants further note that claims 56 and 65-66 have been cancelled. Therefore, the rejection of claims 56 and 65-66 is now moot.

The Applicants have also amended independent claim 49 to now include the elements of the previously presented (i.e., non-amended) claim 37. With this amendment, the Applicants submit that claim 49 now includes all the elements of previously presented claims 37 and 44, and at least one additional element. Accordingly, the Applicants submit that independent claim 49 is now in condition for allowance, and therefore, the rejection of this claim is moot. Because claims 51-55 now ultimately depend from claim 49, the Applicants submit that these claims are also placed in condition for allowance.

System claim 64 has also been amended. This claim now includes elements similar to the elements claimed in previously presented claim 32 (via claim 31), which the Examiner has noted is allowable. Accordingly, the Applicants submit that independent claim 64 is now in condition for allowance, and therefore, the rejection of this claim is moot.

CONCLUSION

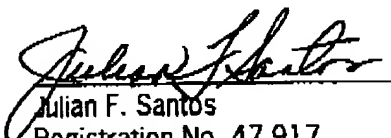
The Applicants submit that these amendments place the application in condition for allowance and request that the Examiner enter these amendments and issue a Notice of Allowability. If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney, at 312-913-3304.

Respectfully submitted,

McDONNELL BOEHNEN
HULBERT & BERGHOFF LLP

Date: February 16, 2005

By:


Julian F. Santos
Registration No. 47,917

McDONNELL BOEHNEN HULBERT & BERGHOFF LLP
300 SOUTH WACKER DRIVE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60606
TELEPHONE (312) 913-0001

21

MBHB: 98,666
S/N: 09/214,347
FILING DATE: 12 DEC 1998